

All Grace Through Mary

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ALL the Christian ages have acknowledged Mary's intercessory power with her Divine Son. The writings of the Fathers accept without question the potency of her mediation with Christ. Our heart tells us that it could not be otherwise. But the Scriptures themselves give us the most striking examples of her influence with God.

Christ's first public miracle, both in the order of grace and in the order of nature, was worked through Mary's mediation. Not before her word of salutation to Elizabeth was the infant John sanctified in his mother's womb, and only at Mary's intervention was the miracle wrought by Our Saviour at the marriage feast in Cana.

For her to touch the heart of Jesus no direct request was necessary. A mere word of greeting from her lips sufficed for God to work the wonder of His grace in the soul of John, and the simple mention of a need by her caused Christ to change the water into wine, even before His hour had come.

Applying, then, to Mary the words of Holy Scripture, "I like an aqueduct came out of paradise," St. Bernard wrote: "Mary was given the world as a channel through which God's graces are to flow out upon us."

But not to men alone is her influence confined. "Mother of God," St. Cyril exclaimed amid the universal acclaim of the Council of Ephesus in the year 431, "through thee the angels and archangels rejoice, the demons are put to flight, and the fallen creature is received up into heaven!"

From the very earliest ages Irenaeus proclaimed her "the advocate of the virgin Eve," and all the successive Christian centuries have hailed her the Dispenser of God's graces to men. It was nothing new, therefore, when in the thirteenth century St. Bonaventure forcefully stated: "Since God was pleased to dwell in the womb of the Blessed Virgin, I dare say without hesitation that she acquired a species of jurisdiction over all the distribution of graces."

The point here touched upon is precisely the question of supreme moment today. Can it be said, aside from all

figure or exaggeration, that every grace we receive comes to us through Mary only, and through her actual intercession for us with Christ, her Son?

That is the question of greatest moment to us all, especially in this our own day. Fortunately, not only can we answer it, *in the affirmative*, and indeed with the utmost certainty, but there is the added possibility, as all understand, of a proximate Definition by the Church on this very subject. Such an infallible declaration would turn upon the title which the Church in her liturgy has already given to Mary: "Mediatress of All Graces."

To ascertain, then, the exact mind of the Church on this important title, which so perfectly crystallizes the belief of the Catholic world, we need but turn to the official pronouncements of recent Pontiffs, and carefully examine the Mass and Divine Office assigned by the Church for the feast of Our Lady under that special invocation. With the "Church teaching" and the "Church praying" to guide us we know that we cannot be led astray.

TEACHING OF LEO XIII

During his extended pontificate a long series of Encyclicals on the devotion of the Holy Rosary was written by Pope Leo XIII. Constant reference, as we would naturally expect, is made in them to Mary's intercessory power. And in all these authoritative documents, it should be noted, the foundation of Mary's motherly mediation for us with Christ, her Son, is shown us in her twofold motherhood, as Mother of God and Mother of men.

This mediation is described by the Pope not merely as an exercise of Mary's good will towards us, but as a *function* divinely assigned to her, like a mother's duty towards her child. "The fact that by our prayer we seek the help of Mary," he says in his Encyclical *Jucunda semper*, "is based as on its foundation upon her function of conciliating Divine grace for us, which she is incessantly exercising with God."

This function of Mary, as Mediatress of Divine Grace, is essentially different from the intercession of the Saints. It ultimately goes back, Pope Leo explains, to her definite part in the work of our Redemption. Through her free

oblation of the Divine Victim and her sufferings with Him, she merited the title of Co-Redemptrix. As, therefore, she participated with Christ in the meriting of Divine grace by Him, so now she participates in the distribution of the same grace, though always in a position subordinated to His and dependent upon Him. For Christ is the Only Redeemer as He is the Only Mediator with God. Hence, as Pope Leo in his Encyclical *Adjutricem populi* writes, it was ordained by Divine Providence that:

She who had been the Cooperator in the sacrament of man's Redemption might also be the Cooperator in the grace derived from Him throughout all time (*gratiae ex Illo in omne tempus derivandae esset pariter administra*).

It will be noticed that no grace is excluded from this process, but every single particle comes to us through Mary's hands, that is, through the exercise of her function as Mediatrix of All Graces. This could not be expressed more plainly than in the Encyclical *Octobri mense* in which the great Pontiff in most explicit terms states:

Truly and in all precision we may affirm that nothing whatsoever of that immense treasure of all graces which the Lord brought us (*nihil prorsus de permagno illo omnis gratiae thesauro quam attulit Dominus*) . . . nothing, God so wishing, is granted us save through Mary (*nihil nobis nisi per Mariam, Deo sic volente, impertiri*).

Referring gratefully to Our Lord, in the Encyclical *Jucunda semper*, for having given us "such a Mediatrix," Pope Leo adds his own confirmation to the beautiful words of St. Bernardine of Sienna that describe the threefold transmission of Divine grace, which: "In most perfect order is dispensed from God to Christ, from Christ to the Virgin, from the Virgin to us."

Reviewing, therefore, the doctrine taught in his Encyclicals by Leo XIII, we find that Mary not merely intercedes for us in Heaven, as the Saints and Angels may do, but implores God's aid for us in virtue of a special function assigned to her. This is the fitting parallel of the position that she occupied upon earth. As here she most intimately, though subordinately, participated in the gaining of all graces, so now she participates in the distribution of them all, dependently upon her Divine Son. Her office

as Dispenser of all graces is no less universal and extensive than the office of Christ as Mediator with God. No single grace, in brief, is obtained by us from Him which does not first pass through Mary's hand and which is not first implored for us by her.

Obviously the doctrine taught to the entire Church by Pope Leo XIII was not merely that of a general mediatorial intercession with Christ on the part of Mary, but of a particular, actual intervention by her for each of us and for each grace that comes to us. *Not merely Mary's universal mediation, but her actual intervention in the distribution of all graces is clearly implied by him.*

TEACHING OF PIUS X

Turning now to the successor of Leo XIII we find him, if anything, even more explicit in his zealous efforts to inculcate this same doctrine.

"Can any one fail to see," he wrote in his Encyclical on the Jubilee of the Immaculate Conception, "that there is no surer or more direct road than by Mary for uniting all mankind in Christ and obtaining through Him the perfect adoption of sons, that we may be holy and immaculate in the sight of God." Since Mary conceived and brought forth the Son of God, "the Author and Finisher of our Faith," the Pope proceeds, "it surely follows that His Mother, most holy, should be recognized as participating in the Divine Mysteries and as being in a measure the guardian of them, and that upon her as a foundation, the noblest after Christ, rises the edifice of the Faith of all the centuries." And then, in eloquent words, Mary is shown to us as linked up in every way with the salvation of mankind and with God's entire economy of grace.

How think otherwise? God could have given us the Redeemer of the human race, and the Founder of the Faith, in another way than through the Virgin. But since Divine Providence has pleased that we should have the Man-God through Mary, who conceived him by the Holy Ghost, and bore Him in her womb, *it only remains for us to receive Christ from the hands of Mary.*

Hence whenever the Scriptures prophesy of the grace which was to come to us the Redeemer of mankind is almost invariably presented to us with His Mother.

The Lamb that is to rule the world will be sent, but He will be sent from the rock of the desert. The flower will bloom, but it will bloom from the root of Jesse. Adam, the father of mankind, looked to Mary to crush the serpent's head, and he restrained the tears which the malediction brought into his eyes. Noe thought of her when shut up in the Ark of safety; Abraham when prevented from the slaying of his son; Jacob at the sight of the ladder on which the Angels ascended and descended; Moses amazed at the sight of the bush which burned but was not consumed; David escorting the Ark of God with dancing and psalmody; Elias as he looked at the little cloud which rose out of the sea. In fine, after Christ, we find in Mary the end of the law and the fulfilment of the figures and oracles.

And as Mary was united with Christ in "figure and oracle" so, at His coming, she was to be most intimately united with Him in truth and reality. From her, as the Holy Father says, the Divine Victim was formed, by her tended, and nourished, and offered at the altar, until:

When the supreme hour of the Son had come, beside the Cross of Jesus stood Mary His Mother, not merely occupied in contemplating the cruel spectacle, but rejoicing that her only Son was offered for the salvation of mankind, and so entirely participating in His passion that, if it had been possible, she would have gladly borne all the torments that her Son underwent. *From this community of will and suffering between Christ and Mary she merited to become most worthily the Reperatrix of the lost world and Dispenser of all the gifts that our Saviour purchased for us by His Death and by His Blood.*

These are crucial words. Be it noticed, the Pope makes not one single exception, but expressly teaches that every single grace, without excluding even one of all the gifts Christ has merited, will ever come to any soul upon earth, except through Mary, whom he calls in most explicit terms, *universim munerum dispensatrix*; namely: "Dispenser of all gifts without exception."

Than this doctrine nothing could be clearer, nothing more satisfying to heart and intellect. On earth Our Lady cooperated in our salvation by her Divine Motherhood, her sufferings and oblation of the Divine Victim; in Heaven she is the Dispenser of the merits thus won, *universim* without any exception.

This further enables us also to understand the difference in the manner in which Christ and Mary merited towards our salvation, a distinction which the Pope himself, in his Encyclical *Ad diem illum*, perfectly explains.

"Summoned by Christ to the work of human salvation," he says, "she [Mary] merited for us congruously, as they say, what Christ merited for us condignly." In other words, the Sovereign Pontiff states that Christ merited for us in the truest and strictest sense, "condignly," while the merit gained for us through Mary was freely given, because so it was befitting on the part of Almighty God. In a word, it was "congruous." In the same way the consequent function of distributing all graces belongs to Mary not as her right, but as *congruously* given her by God.

TEACHING OF BENEDICT XV

Benedict XV is known by all the world as having been most intimately connected with the promotion of the same doctrine. We might almost say that he was even more explicit than his predecessors in his language, for we have from his lips the plain and absolute statement that no difficulty whatsoever now stands in the way of a doctrinal Definition that would make the belief in Mary's great prerogative as the active Mediatrix of *all* graces that come to us from Christ, an Article of Faith. On the unquestioned testimony of Father Bainvel, embodied in that authoritative work "Dictionnaire Apologétique de la Foi Catholique," Benedict XV is quoted as saying in a private audience:

Not merely the spiritual maternity of Mary, and her universal mediation, but moreover her actual intervention in the distribution of absolutely all graces can be defined without the slightest difficulty.

It is in this final sense that the words of all the three Pontiffs here quoted must evidently be taken, and it is this precise statement, as cited here by one of the leading authorities on our subject, which indicates to us the exact meaning of that glorious title given to Mary when we invoke her as "Mediatrix of All Graces."

But to enter, if possible, still more directly into the

mind of the Church we need but study carefully the Mass and Office assigned by Pope Benedict XV for the Feast of Our Lady, as Mediatrix of All Graces, which is celebrated on May 31. Throughout it the thought repeated in antiphon, hymn and prayer is ever the same: "All gifts the Redeemer has merited for us are distributed by Mary, the Mother." I shall confine myself here to the lessons of the Matins which are particularly noticeable for the artistry displayed in their choice as well as for the significance of the doctrine and historical testimony they afford.

THE DIVINE OFFICE

Taking up the three lessons of the First Nocturn we behold in the first the picture of Our Lady enthroned in glory: "I dwelt in the highest places, and my throne is in a pillar of a cloud. . . . In every nation I have had the chief rule" (Ecclus. xxiv. 7, 10). In the second we see her dispensing the graces which she merited with Christ: "In me is all grace of the way and of the truth, in me is all hope of life and of virtue. Come over to me all ye that desire me, and be filled with my fruits" (*Ibid.* 25, 26). In the third, as in the climax of a majestic symphony, we finally witness the descent of God's graces from her hands:

I, like a brook out of a river of a mighty water; I, like a channel of a river, and like an aqueduct came out of paradise.

I said: I will water my garden of plants, and I will water abundantly the fruits of my meadow.

And behold, my brook became a great river, and my river came near to a sea. (*Ibid.* 41-43).

If this application to Mary of the words spoken primarily of Divine Wisdom is the most exalted poetry, we come in the Second Nocturn to the historic testimony for the belief of all the Christian ages in Mary's function as Mediatrix of All Graces. In the three lessons there are two leaps of four centuries each, and in each period we find precisely the same doctrine as that taught by the great Popes of our own time. The first to be quoted, St. Ephrem, the Syrian, belongs to the fourth century. Beholding in Mary "the surest pledge of our resurrection"

by whom we hope to attain to the celestial kingdom, he continues:

Through thee, O only Immaculate one, have been derived, are derived, will be derived all glory, honor and sanctity from the time of the first Adam even to the consummation of ages, for Apostles, Prophets, the just and the humble of heart. Every creature rejoices in thee, O thou full of grace.

Leaping then over an interval of four centuries we come in our next lesson to St. Germanus, who belongs to the eighth century. Continuing the self-same theme, which runs without interruption through the ages, he exclaims:

No one obtaineth salvation save through thee, O most holy! No one is freed from evils, save through thee, O most immaculate! No one is enriched with blessings, save through thee, O most chaste! No one receiveth the gift of grace from God's mercy, save through thee, O most highly honored!

Another leap of four centuries and we find ourselves in the delightful company of St. Bernard, who in turn shows the unbroken continuity of Catholic thought and but restates in other words the same Divine law of grace: "For such is His will who would have us entirely through Mary." Beautifully we are told by him to look up from Eve to Mary:

With what eager devotion does He not wish us to honor her who placed for us the abundance of all blessings in Mary. If then there is aught of hope for us, if there is aught of grace, if there is aught of salvation, we know it descends to us from her.

Finally in the Third Nocturn we hear St. Bernardine of Sienna discoursing in lofty words of the mystery that was enacted beneath the Cross, when Christ bade Mary look upon us all, in the person of John, as her children, even as we were thenceforth to look upon her as our spiritual Mother. "Mystically, therefore, we comprehend in St. John all the souls of the elect whose Mother the Blessed Virgin became through love." So once more we see that our Mediatrix is also our Mother, and therefore in her Responsory, the Church hastens to add: "Let us go with confidence to the throne of grace!"

The testimony of the Christian ages, then, is fully in accord with the teaching of all our recent Pontiffs, when they declare Mary the Mediatrix of All Graces.

Why All Grace Through Mary?

THE teaching of the Holy See regarding Mary's celestial function as Mediatrix of All Graces is a doctrine now sufficiently clear to be raised at any opportune moment to a dogma of the Church. All that at present can still be required is a wider and more thorough understanding of the technical reasons for this truth which is already part of the devotional life of the Faithful.

That some opposition, however, should exist is naturally to be expected. Yet it is slight and insignificant if we consider the battle that raged for centuries around Mary's great prerogative of the Immaculate Conception.

On the other hand there are also those who fear the comment of the world about them. They fail to realize that Catholicism has no mightier weapon today for the conquest of the world for Christ than Mary's intercession with her Son. If Protestantism still remains fearful that what we give to the Mother is taken from the Child, our task must simply be to convince it of its error.

It is the misfortune of Protestants that they see in Mary nothing save her purely physical maternity, recognizing in her no connection with the work of our salvation, except for the fact that she has given us the Saviour. It follows then that precisely the discussion of Mary's function as Mediatrix of All Graces must make plain to every open mind Mary's intimate, though subordinate participation and cooperation in the Redemption itself.

MARY'S COOPERATION WITH CHRIST

The sole reason why Mary is said to cooperate, by her intercession, in the dispensation of every grace that comes to mankind, is because she first cooperated with Christ in the acquisition of all these graces. Christ, it is true, remains the One Mediator as He is the One Redeemer, but in the distribution of graces as in the gaining of them Mary is active with Him and at His side. Her function in the work of Redemption as in the largess of graces could not be better described than by the word *Administra*, which Pope Leo XIII happily uses in both these

connections. It means a subordinated "helper," and thus distinctively indicates Mary's place in the work which is properly ascribed to Christ. It was fitting, says this great Pontiff, that she "who had been the *Administra* of the sacrament of man's redemption," should also be "the *Administra* of the grace derived from Him through all time." (*Adiutricem populi*, Sept. 5, 1895.)

Proceeding further Pope Leo XIII made this doctrine of Mary's participation in the work of the Redemption the dogmatic foundation of the Definition of the Immaculate Conception, just as it could now be made the dogmatic foundation of another Marian dogma, in case of the Definition of Mary's universal mediation with Christ. Yet Pope Leo himself could be no more positive on this subject than the Fathers of the Church through all the centuries who fearlessly speak of Mary as a cause of our salvation, *causa salutis*—not merely because she bore the Saviour, but because she cooperated with Him in the work of the Redemption.

"SECOND EVE," "CO-REDEMPTRIX"

The germ idea of all that has here been said was already clearly contained in the title given to Mary by the Fathers of the first four centuries, nearest the Apostolic age, when they equivalently spoke of her as "The Second Eve." That was but another way of calling her, as Pope Leo does, "Consort in the work of saving the human race" (*Supremi Apostolatus*).

"Second Eve" and "Co-Redemptrix" may be taken as synonymous, while "Mediatress of All Graces" is but the sequel of both these titles. As Eve truly cooperated in our fall, though secondarily and dependently upon Adam, so Mary even more truly cooperated in the Redemption, though also secondarily and dependently upon the Second Adam, Christ. As Eve was the Mother of all the living by nature, so Mary was to be the Mother of all the living by grace. Thus from the earliest patristic age we have testimony to the active and intimate participation of Mary in the Redemption and implicitly in the entire economy of grace, including its distribution to the end of time.

WITNESS OF EARLIEST FATHERS

No one could more strongly express the parallel between the Virgin Eve and the Virgin Mary, the one bringing death the other life, than St. Justin Martyr who was born as early as the year 103. "Eve, who was a virgin and undefiled," he wrote, "having conceived the word of the serpent, brought forth disobedience." But our Lord, we are further taught by Him, "became man by the Virgin, in order that the disobedience which proceeded from the serpent might receive its destruction in the same manner in which it derived its origin" (*Dial. Tryph.* c. 50).

Coming next to Irenaeus, who tells us he was instructed in the Faith by Polycarp, the disciple of the Apostle St. John, and who therefore, like St. Justin, connects us with the apostolic age of the Church, we are again taught the same plain doctrine regarding Mary as the Second Eve. He directly speaks of her as "the advocate of the virgin Eve," and in still stronger words calls her "*the cause of salvation* both to herself and to the whole human race." Let me quote the entire passage, which dates back to the very beginnings of the Church and implicitly embraces all that later ages could say of Mary. Irenaeus says:

In accordance with this (God's) design, Mary the Virgin is found obedient saying: "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done to me according to thy word." But Eve was disobedient, for she did not obey when as yet she was a virgin. And even as she, who though she had a husband was nevertheless a virgin, through her disobedience *was made the cause of death both to herself and to the entire human race*, so Mary who also had a man betrothed to her though she remained a virgin, by *yielding obedience became the cause of salvation both to herself and to the whole human race*. . . . The knot of Eve's disobedience was loosed by the obedience of Mary. For what the Virgin Eve bound fast through unbelief, this did the Virgin Mary set free through faith" (*Adv. Haereses*).

If to the testimony of these two men we add that of Tertullian, who at almost the same early period wrote in Africa, we cover the entire Church of that earliest patristic age, since these men represent all its principal sections.

As the ensnaring word of the serpent crept into the ear of Eve, he writes in his treatise on "The Flesh of Christ," so the Word of God was to be introduced into the Virgin Mary's soul, "that what had been reduced to ruin by this sex might by the selfsame sex be restored to salvation. As Eve had believed the serpent, so Mary believed the angel. The delinquency which the one occasioned by believing, the other by believing effaced." Eve believed the serpent, Mary believed the Angel of God. (Cf. Stewart, "The Greater Eve," c. IV.)

CRUSHING THE SERPENT'S HEAD

To these passages from the earliest of our ecclesiastical writers let me add one later passage from among many equally pertinent. Summarizing in few words all that we need say of Mary as the Second Eve, the true Mother of all the living, the Mother of Divine Grace, St. Augustine wrote:

Eve is the mother of the human race, Mary the author of our salvation. Eve formed us, Mary strengthened us. We multiply every day through Eve, we reign eternally through Mary. We are borne down to earth by Eve, and are raised to heaven through Mary. (*Nova. Pat. Bib. I. p. 1.*)

It is not straining a point to add here that even our first parents in Paradise might well, in their own way, have already perceived the concept of the Second Eve, which was so persistently dwelled upon by the Fathers of the Church in the earliest centuries. It was, in fact, very clearly contained in the first revelation of the Redemption made to man, in that great Prophecy of the Woman who with her Seed was to crush the serpent's head. It matters not, for our present purpose, how we read the original text. The enmities of Satan are there described as directed against both the Woman and her Seed, against Mary and Christ. So, too, the triumph is the common victory of both.

Mary, as the Fathers truly read this *Protoevangelium*, was here described as Co-Redemptrix. Through Christ and with Christ, she was to crush the serpent's head. In the words forming the dogmatic foundation of the Defini-

tion of the Immaculate Conception, to which I have alluded, Pope Leo XIII thus refers to Mary's cooperation with Christ:

So the most holy Virgin, united with Him in the closest and most indissoluble bond, *together with Him and by Him*, exercising her everlasting enmities against the poisonous serpent and most gloriously triumphing over it, crushes its head with her immaculate foot. (Bull *Ineffabilis*.)

BRIDE OF THE WORD

But perhaps the patristic description of Mary as "cause of salvation," *causa salutis*, may become still more clear by turning directly to the Mystery of the Incarnation. Referring to this St. Germanus, in the eighth century, thus addressed Our Lady: "Hail, thou Bridal Chamber wherein the Word, desiring to recall the erring race of men, wedded to Himself our flesh, that those who of their own will have been made exiles, might be reconciled by Him to the Father."

All this is most true. But Mary is even more than merely the chaste Bridal Chamber where the Divine Word was wedded to our human nature. That very flesh which there the Second Person of the Most Blessed Trinity took to Himself in those "Divine Nuptials," *Connubium Divinum*, as the Fathers call them, was the immaculate flesh of Mary, free from every stain of original sin. Hence under this sublime aspect, the Fathers further give to Mary the glorious title of *Sponsa Verbi*, "Bride of the Word." (Cf. Schüth, S.J., "Mediatrix.")

We are here, be it understood, dealing with no merely poetic figures, but with the profoundest mysteries of our Faith. In those "nuptials" which the Divine Person of the Eternal Word contracted with our nature it was necessary that our human race should on its own side be represented by a person, a human Bride, who was to give her consent to that bond of union which took place in the Incarnation. In the words of St. Thomas, it was Mary who there represented our entire human race.

Her relation to the work of our Redemption, which was here in question, thus became far more intimate than

the part of Eve in our loss. Mary under this formality held a position no less responsible and weighty, no less freighted with imponderable consequences for the entire human race, than Adam had held in the fall. Here, then, all graces that would come to mankind were strictly conditioned upon Mary's consent, upon her active cooperation with the work of Redemption thus begun with the Incarnation.

MARY'S PART IN THE REDEMPTION

No less clear is Mary's cooperation in the work of the Redemption under a second formality, namely as Mother of the God-Man.

We have often heard it stated, as a pious opinion, that before going forth to His Sacred Passion Christ first obtained the consent of Mary. That consent may then have been renewed, but it had already been given by Mary in the mystery of the Incarnation. Here she consented, not merely to assuming her physical motherhood, but to the entire plan of the Redemption, and to her definite place in it. For this it sufficed that she embraced the entire will of God: *Fiat*, "Be it done to me."

Her place was not to be in the public eye. She was not called to belong to the exterior ministry of Christ. Her's was a participation of the heart. In her heart she consented to the redemptive work which the angel messenger unrolled before her, in her heart she made her oblation of the Divine Victim that was to be nursed at her breast for the supreme Sacrifice, in her heart she endured with a mother's anguish all the torments of the Crucified, to her heart she pressed at last the dead form of her Divine Child, once more returned to her embraces after that Death to which she had constantly consented in her perpetual conformity with the Divine will. And so in her arms she held the Treasure of all the world, and the graces she purchased with it are now distributed, without exception, at her intercession only. Could any truth be more satisfactory, any truth more beautiful?

Mary's *Fiat* at the Incarnation was the *Fiat* of Calvary as well as of Bethlehem, the *Fiat* of the Cross as well as

of the Crib, the *Fiat* too of all that was still to follow for the completion of the work of Redemption. For only as a unity can that work be rightly conceived. It opens with the Incarnation and stretches on in its effects to the last grace that will be given to the last human being that will ever live upon earth. The work begun on earth must thus be continued in Heaven. It is one and the same work, and so in all its stages we have the cooperation of Mary with her Son, whether as Redeemer or as Mediator. And to all that was comprised in this complete work of the Redemption, did Mary give her consent in that sublime *Fiat*, for which, as St. Bernard says, earth, heaven and hell awaited with eager expectancy.

Of the far-reaching results of that work, and of Mary's merciful love in dispensing to the entire human race the graces thus won, the same Saint has given us a touching and magnificent description. It comes nearest indeed to doing justice to his great subject. But even the words of a St. Bernard can never express in mere earthly language all that we owe to Mary.

"Who, then, O thrice-blessed One!" he exclaims, lifting up his voice to the throne of Mary, Mediatrix of all God's graces to men—"who, then, O thrice-blessed One, can tell the length and breadth, the height and depth of all thy mercy! The length thereof extends even to the end of days unto those who call upon thee. Its width is to the limits of the earth, that therewith may all the earth abound. Its height soars up to the rebuilding of God's eternal Kingdom. Its depth reaches down to those in darkness and seated in the shadow of death, to obtain for them **salvation**.

"By thee are the Heavens peopled, the depths of Hell rendered void, and the ruins of God's Kingdom reconstructed upon earth."

To those riches of all mercy, as the Saint exhorts us, let our misery have recourse. But above all, let us ever remember, that Mary is Our Mother!

Mother of Men

FOLLOWING the sublime theology of St. Paul, where he speaks of the mystic body of Christ, we find in it the great reason of Mary's spiritual motherhood of men. As Christ, the Head of that mystic body was begotten by her, so the members, too, must claim her motherhood. She is mother not merely of the physical body of Christ, but of His mystical body as well.

Not therefore beneath the Cross did Mary become the spiritual Mother of mankind. Rather it was there that this Motherhood was publicly proclaimed by her Divine Son, who was the first of many brethren. By no other word than "Woman," then applied to her by Christ, could He have better recalled for us the fulfillment in Mary of the Prophecy made in Paradise. From henceforth all generations should know in Mary the Mother of all the living by grace, the Second Eve at the side of the Second Adam, with whom and through whom she was to complete the work of Redemption, even to the dispensing of the last grace that would come to mankind. Truly is Mary, therefore, the great "Woman," who is Mother of God and Mother of men.

Admirably in his Encyclical of the year 1904 did Pope Pius X describe Mary's spiritual motherhood of men:

Everyone must know well that Jesus, the Word made flesh, is the Saviour of mankind. Now, as God-made-Man, He too has a real body like ours, but as Redeemer of our race He has a spiritual, and, as we say, *a mystical body*, which is the company of those who believe in Him. We, who are many, are one body in Christ (Rom. xii. 5).

But the Blessed Virgin not only gave birth to the Eternal Son of God, that He might become man, taking a human nature from her, but also that through that nature He should be the Saviour of men . . . so that in the womb of His most pure Mother Christ took to Himself not only a body like ours, but also a mystical body; made up of all those who were to believe in Him.

Mary, then, when she bore the Saviour in her womb, may be said to have also borne all those whose life was contained in His life. And all of us who are united with Christ, and who, as the

Apostle says, are members of His body, of His flesh and His bone (Eph. v. 30), are born of Mary as one body under one Head.

We therefore can now more readily understand that passage in St. Augustine where the elect are said to be hidden, during their entire mortal life, in the womb of the most Holy Virgin. There they are nourished, protected and grow up into the true likeness of Christ, until they are brought forth to eternal glory. In his Encyclical on the Jubilee of the Immaculate Conception, just quoted, Pope Pius X expressed the same thought. Referring to the vision of the Great Woman in the Apocalypse, clothed with the sun, the moon beneath her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars, whom St. John describes as travailing in childbirth, the Holy Father wrote:

John therefore saw the Most Holy Mother of God, already in eternal happiness, yet travailing in a mysterious childbirth. What birth was it? Surely it was the birth of us who, still in exile, are yet to be generated to the perfect charity of God and to eternal happiness. And the birth-pains show the love and desire with which the Virgin from Heaven above watches over us and strives with unwearying prayer to bring about the completion of the number of the elect.

How could the fact of Mary's function as Mediatrix of all graces be more perfectly expressed than by this figure. There is absolutely nothing for which the child in the womb is not entirely dependent upon its mother. True, it is from God that the mother herself draws her own life, and His power alone at every moment sustains her being, but it is through her in turn that He accomplishes all things for the infant in her womb.

That precisely is our position in the life of grace. To God alone and to Christ our one Saviour and Mediator we owe all things, but it is through Mary alone that in turn all their spiritual gifts come to us. So it is ordained and so it is most eminently befitting to the Divine Goodness and Wisdom. This, we have seen, follows directly from Mary's position as Co-Redemptrix which God assigned to her in His plans of eternal salvation. In the sublimest sense of the word may we call Mary, Our Mother,

THE CHURCH AND MARY

And here opens up another thought too vast for discussion. Not merely is Mary compared with the Church by the Fathers, but she is practically identified with it. Church and Mary both express the same idea, both are for us the channels of Divine grace and in both we see the Mother of all the living by grace. So the symbolism applied to the Church, perfectly and accurately refers also to Mary. The Great Woman of St. John's Apocalypse, described as travailing in childbirth, and who saves her seed from the destructive wrath of the Dragon, equally represents the Church and Mary. Repeatedly the Fathers insist upon this twofold truth. And so we find verified Mary's function as Mediatrix of all graces, with her Divine Son and dependently on Him, even until the number of the elect shall be completed, the children of Mary by Divine grace, whom she rescues from the fangs of the Dragon.

To understand most perfectly the intimate relation between Mary and the Church we need but remember that every grace which flows to us through the ministry of the Church comes to us also through the mediation of Mary. I need hardly state that this function of Our Lady is not defended here as due to her of her own right, but, in the words of Pope Leo XIII, as freely conferred on her, "God so willing."

MEDIATRIX OF ALL GRACES

And now, in fine, when we come to the great question of a dogmatic Definition by the Church there are those who are willing to admit the possibility of defining Mary's title as Mother of Divine Grace, but hesitate at the thought of dogmatically declaring her to be the Dispenser of each and every grace that comes to us from Christ. Yet there is no defense for such a position.

The arguments that prove Mary to be the Dispenser of any graces prove her just as well to be the actual and active Dispenser of each and every grace that comes to us. Indeed, it is to that conclusion that they inevitably tend and not to a more restricted interpretation of Mary's function as spiritual Mother of mankind. Mary's part in

the work of acquiring these graces was not restricted except in as far as it was secondary to that of Christ. So too, there is no reason for any restriction now in her function as Mediatrix of all these graces to us, except only, as I have so repeatedly stated, her complete dependence in all things upon Christ, her Saviour.

Let us not then fear to repeat in our day the great truth that comes down to us through the Christian centuries, and is derived from the Scriptures themselves and the teaching of the Apostolic age: that Mary is under Christ, the cause of our salvation. And, therefore, as all grace was merited for us by Christ, with Mary as Co-Redemptress, so all grace is distributed to us from Christ through Mary as universal Mediatrix between Him and mankind.

Such is the doctrine I have here set forth. It is taught by the Holy See in Encyclical after Encyclical addressed to the entire Christian world. It is made a foundation of the Catholic's devotion to Mary, together with her Divine Motherhood and her Spiritual Maternity of men. It is proposed to all the Faithful in the solemnity of a Holy Mass especially dedicated to do honor to this sublime function assigned to her by God. It is given a Divine Office to be recited by the priest and chanted in choir. It is all crystalized by the Church in the wonderful title she has given to Mary: "Mediatrix of All Graces."

Who then can doubt, who can hesitate to answer with whole-hearted, chivalrous devotion that call of the Church to all her children to glorify Mary on earth as God has glorified her in Heaven; to hail her with that name which is so sweet to our lips, so consoling to our heart, so unassailably confirmed by all the arguments that can appeal to our Christian intelligence—"Mediatrix of All Graces!"

With Pope Benedict XV we therefore repeat, what is indeed no more than the inevitable conclusion we all must draw from the teachings of the Holy See, that: "Not merely the spiritual maternity of Mary, and her universal mediation, but moreover her actual intervention in the distribution of absolutely all graces *can be defined without the slightest difficulty.*"

The jewel is ready for Mary's crown.

Prayer of the Church to Mary Mediatress of All Graces

Antiphon

In thy hand is our salvation. Do thou look upon us
and joyously shall we serve the King Our Lord.

V.—Pray for us O most powerful Mediatress.

R.—That we may be made worthy of the promises of
Christ.

Prayer

O Lord Jesus Christ, Our Mediator with the Father,
who hast made the Most Blessed Virgin Mary, Thy
Mother, to be our Mother also and Mediatress with Thee,
grant that whosoever shall come to Thee seeking Thy
favors may be rejoiced by receiving all things through
her, who livest and reignest forever and ever, Amen.